

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 05057 081506Z
ACTION PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2552
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 5057

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PFOR MILY US IN
SUBJ: DIEGO GARCIA REPORTAGE ECHOED IN DELHI

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: THREE OF THE SIX DELHI ENGLISH-
LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS APRIL 8 CARRIED NEWS ARTICLES ON
DIEGO GARCIA, BASED UPON THE REPORTING OF AMERICAN
JOURNALISTS WHO VISITED ISLAND. THE ARTICLES STRESS
THAT THE US NAVY IS WORKING ROUND THE CLOCK TO COMPLETE
CONSTRUCTION OF FACILITY ON THE ISLAND.

2. THE SAMACHAR BRIEF VERSION CARRIED ON PAGE ONE OF
THE "NATIONAL HERALD" SAYS, "THE UNITED STATES NAVY
HAS STEPPED UP WORK FOR COMPLETING THE CONSTRUCTION
OF THE AMERICAN AIR AND NAVAL BASE" ON DIEGO GARCIA.
SAMACHAR ADDS THAT "DIEGO GARCIA BASE IS THE FIRST
OF ITS KIND" BEING SET UP BY THE USG DESPITE PROTESTS
BY INDIA, SRI LANKA, TANZANIA AND SEVERAL OTHER LIT-
TORAL STATES WHO HAVE DEMANDED AN INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF
PEACE. ON AN INSIDE PAGE, THE "TIME OF INDIA" SPECIAL
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CORRESPONDENT FROM WASHINGTON PARAPHRASES A NEW YORK
TIMES STORY WHICH DETAILS THE STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION OF
THE RUNWAY, FUEL TANKS, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND
DEEP WATER ANCHORAGE. THE ARTICLE NOTES THAT "REPORTERS
HAVE SEEN EARTH-MOVING EQUIPMENT OPERATING 20 HOURS A
DAY, USING POWERFUL GENERATOR-DRIVEN FLOODLIGHTS LATE
AT NIGHT." THE ARTICLE ADDS, "HOW ALL THIS FURIOUS

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY SQUARES WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S CALL ON MARCH 9 FOR THE COMPLETE DEMILITARIZATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN IS NOT IMMEDIATELY CLEAR. APPARENTLY THAT IS NOT BOTHERING THE US DEFENSE DEPARTMENT." THE STORY CONTINUES THAT ONE EXPLANATION AVAILABLE IS THAT THE SOVIET BASE IN BERBERA IS MUCH BIGGER THAN THE ONE IN DIEGO GARCIA AND EVEN WHEN DIEGO GARCIA IS FULLY OPERATIONAL IT WILL HAVE ONLY HALF THE PERSONNEL OF BERBERA AND WILL NOT HAVE SUPPORT FACILITIES FOR SURFACE-TO-SURFACE AND AIR-TO-SURFACE MISSILES ALLEGEDLY AVAILABLE AT BERBERA. THE "INDIAN EXPRESS" ON ITS INSIDE-PAGE STORY STATES THAT THE BASE COST OF \$173 MILLION AND GOES ON TO REPEAT A WASHINGTON POST STORY WHICH DESCRIBES THE DESERTED REMNANTS OF THE COMMUNITY OF PLANTATION WORKERS WHO WERE EVACUATED AND THE DECAYING GRAVES OF A "HANDFUL OF INDIAN ARMY MUSLIM SOLDIERS" WHO DIED THERE FROM DISEASE IN WORLD WAR II. END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE: COMMENT: THE STORIES ON DIEGO GARCIA HAVE APPEARED IN THE INDIAN PRESS WHILE DELEGATES TO THE NON-ALIGNED COORDINATING COMMITTEE CONFERENCE ARE ARGUING FOR THE ELIMINATION OF "BASES SUCH AS DIEGO GARCIA", SOMETIMES TEMPERING THEIR LANGUAGE BY REFERENCES TO "RECENT STATEMENTS FROM GREAT POWERS" (QUOTES ARE FROM INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE). END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. SCHNEIDER

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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